

NEWSLETTER No6

Winter 2015/16

CHURCHES TOGETHER
IN CHESHIRE



Welcome!

Welcome to this, the latest of the newsletters from Churches Together in Cheshire. As before I seek to include both news items and notices of ecumenical activities and events that are taking place within Cheshire, and also information relating more widely to the ecumenical scene across the country. .

In this newsletter we note some of the events of recent months and look ahead to significant events of the next three months. Please see the items in this newsletter relating to these matters.

You will find my contact details at the end of this Newsletter, and if you wish any future edition to include reports of what has been happening in your neck of the woods, or to advertise any forthcoming event I would be pleased to hear from you

Andrew Taylor

Salt of the Earth



On 7th November the Network meeting of Salt of the Earth was held at Daresbury

Innovation Centre and included a tour of the site. A report of that meeting is to be placed on the Salt of the Earth website: www.saltoftheearthnetwork.net.

The next Network meeting is on 4th February at Catalyst, when Lord Andrew Green will be speaking on the topic “Immigration and Asylum: how much can we handle?”

Salt of the Earth also sponsors ‘Salt Sunday’ which in 2016 will be on 5th June, and marked by an event at the Lion Saltworks at Northwich. Further information on both these events will be circulated in the New Year.

Diocesan Ecumenical Officer

Revd. Steve Clapham was, on 5th November, inducted as Ecumenical Officer for the Diocese of Chester, in succession to Canon Mike Lowe. Steve will be combining that role with that of Priest in Charge at Church Lawton, to which he was also inducted by Bishop Libby Lane. Steve was previously Vicar of the parishes of All Saints and St.Peter’s in Crewe, and for the last few years had chaired Churches Together in Crewe. He can be contacted on: steveclapham@outlook.com

The Denominational Ecumenical Officers have both welcomed Steve, and wished Mike Lowe well in his retirement.

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

The theme for the 2016 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, which runs from 18th – 25th January, has been chosen by the churches of Latvia and is:

‘Called to proclaim the mighty acts of the Lord’ (1 Peter 2.9)

Resources for the week are now available from both the World Council of Churches website: www.oikemene.org, and from CTBI on whose website you will find to download, or order, ready printed, an order of service for ecumenical worship and a poster to which you can add your own local details.



The service arranged by Churches Together in Cheshire will be held in Chester Cathedral on 24th January, 2016 at 4.00 pm when the preacher will be the Revd. Lord Leslie Griffiths. The gospel passage chosen by our Latvian sisters and brothers for this service is Matthew 5: 1-16, which includes the call to be salt and light. The salt theme is, of course, particularly appropriate to Cheshire, and it is planned that this should be marked.

Please publicise this service. A warm welcome is extended to all.

Christian Aid

New Year... New Challenge.....

Are you ready for a new challenge in 2016? Would you like to use your skills to help those living in extreme poverty? Are you passionate about justice? Do you want to inspire others to join the fight against extreme poverty? Christian Aid are looking to build their team of volunteer speakers and teachers across Cheshire.

As a volunteer teacher, you will inspire the next generation to build and grow a movement for justice and help young people understand the causes of poverty. Your role as a teacher would include establishing links with local schools and sharing stories about the work of our partner organisations in primary and secondary schools and sixth form centres. You may take assemblies and lessons or run workshops as part of themed days. You will need to have experience of working with children in a classroom environment, confidence within a school setting and be committed to the work of Christian Aid.

If you could commit to around 3 school visits at term, this could be the role for you.

As a volunteer speaker you will be both passionate about eradicating poverty and comfortable speaking in a church environment. Your role as a speaker would include establishing links with local churches and sharing stories about the work of our partner organisations with churches and other groups. Your speaking will inspire people to give, take action and

pray for our work. You will need to have experience of public speaking, confidence within a church setting and be committed to the work of Christian Aid. If you could commit to at least 3 speaking engagements a year, this could be the role for you.

Both roles will be supported by a full time member of staff and an extensive selection of resources and training material. Out of pocket expenses are paid.



If you would like to find out more, please contact Helen Howe on 01925 582820 or email hhowe@christian-aid.org

Churches Together in England

“CHURCHES LISTENING TOGETHER “

Representatives of Churches Together in Cheshire attended the CTE triennial Forum at Swannick at the end of September. The Forum, not a deliberative meeting, more a gathering of those engaged in the ecumenical journey, with its purposes deliberately loosely defined, placed stress on listening to voices not usually heard - the theme encouraged, if not imposed, by the growth of Churches Together in England from being a body of 16 members to one of 43. All needed to be acquainted with each another.

Therefore, representatives from the main groupings within CTE set out what they valued within their particular traditions (a challenge for some whose group, like the Free churches group, embraced a wide

range of traditions) and others from across a wide geographical spectrum reflected on aspects of the ecumenical journey. In this, as at various points, the Forum was prompted to be mindful of Pope Francis' observation that 'unity is achieved whilst walking'.

The second day supplied the main meat of the Forum, with sessions on engaging with the Orthodox Churches, in whose tradition the morning prayers had been held, and with the Pentecostal churches. These sessions were widely appreciated. The afternoon session had been flagged as 'an opportunity to engage with CTE's Presidents' who, either in person or by pre-recorded video links, responded to questions submitted by attendees in advance of the Forum and notified to them. They were challenging questions, such as:

- where do you experience unity?
 - is eucharistic sharing part of your vision, and what would you do to achieve it?
 - what should be the prophetic voice of the church in terms of refugees, asylum seekers, warfare?
 - should we be seeking full visible unity or should we be acknowledging our diversity?
- In relation to that last question Cardinal Vincent Nicholl, who was present at the Forum, argued that diversity was not the opposite or enemy of unity, but a gift of the Holy Spirit.

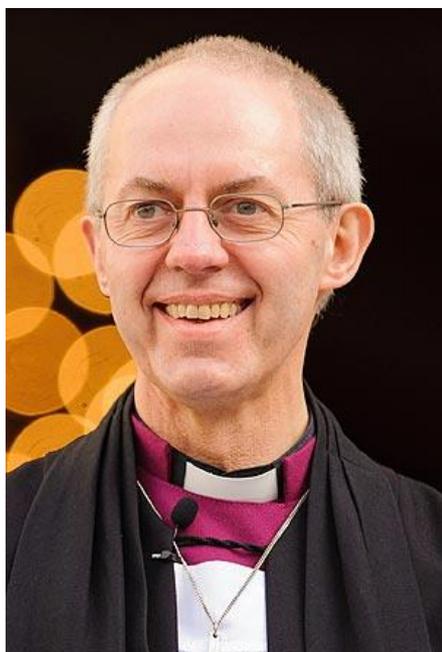
For many the highlight of the Forum was the evening presentation from 12 young adult Christians from a wide spectrum of church backgrounds who had been brought together to attend the Chemin Neuf event 'Welcome to Paradise' in France. From

very strong denominational allegiances, all reported very positive awakenings of ecumenical awareness and of powerful personal spiritual development, and each fluently articulated their excitement in relations to the faith journey they had undertaken.

In the final plenary David Cornick gave a very lucid theological reflection, arguing for a new paradigm for ecumenism, a more critical ecumenism following an iterative and not a linear path to unity. On the CTE website it is possible to read the accumulated feedback comments. One gave a significant insight into the impact of the event:

Ecumenism reminds us to look beyond the conventions that our own individual churches create due to the fact that we are only human, and it calls us to look to what we all endeavour to hold but of course can never manage; the mystery of Christ and his call to serve. The act of dialoguing and the practice of ecumenism is essential in order to develop in our theologies and our understandings of God.

Talking Jesus



The Archbishop of Canterbury, Cardinal Vincent Nichols, the Revd Dr Hugh Osgood, Bishop Eric Brown and Billy Kennedy, all of whom are Presidents of Churches Together in England commend ‘Talking Jesus’ research:

‘At Christmas Christians celebrate God’s great gift of love in Jesus Christ. It is a gift that the Christian church wants to share with everyone. At the beginning of a New Year, we ask you to pray that the love of Jesus will transform the communities in which we live and witness, and that our churches will faithfully fulfil their commission to ‘make disciples of all nations’. (Mt 25:19)

We commend to you the research undertaken about ‘Talking Jesus’ (<http://www.talkingjesus.org/>) as you begin a new year of love and service.’

This message is in association with Hope Together and can be seen: <http://www.cte.org.uk/Publisher/Article.aspx?ID=456209>

Night Shelters

The unusual mildness of the weather should not blind us to the fact that winter is indeed approaching and, as last year, churches in both Macclesfield and Crewe are geared up to operate night shelters for the homeless in the coming months.

Please remember those involved in your prayers.

Winter Hope Accommodation in Macclesfield (WHAM) - The Night Shelter is taking place from the weekend before Christmas (18th December) to the weekend before Easter (18th March),

running each weekend from Friday night to Monday morning. **There is still an urgent need for volunteers.** Those who are interested should, in the first instance, contact David Wightman on 07770 785188.

New Spaces, Old Mindsets?

Conference on partnership working between local authorities and faith groups.

University of Chester 4th November 2015

Delegates from eight local authority areas across the north of England came together at the University of Chester's Riverside Innovation Centre to discuss partnership working between faith groups, local communities and local authorities. The conference, entitled *New Spaces, Old Mindsets? Meeting the Challenge of Creating Hopeful and Flourishing Communities in an Era of Austerity*, was designed to engage with senior personnel from public and faith sectors. Participants came together to discuss the new policy landscape that has emerged out of the 2008 financial crash and which has been shaped by policy frameworks of both localism and austerity.

The day was organised by the University of Chester's Centre for Faiths and Public Policy, Cheshire West and Chester Council, and Link Up, which is a relational network of churches and church leaders in and around Chester, West Cheshire and the wider region.

Senior representatives from Cheshire West and Chester, Stoke on Trent, Doncaster, Durham, Blackpool, St Helens and Trafford attended, along with partners from their respective faith sectors, to discuss the challenges and obstacles that now exist towards providing goods and services, and how to enable flourishing and resilient local communities and neighbourhoods. The conference reflected on examples of good practice, analysing case studies from some of the authorities participating, and speculated on whether these examples could offer broader templates for effective future governance.

For more information and a full report of the conference please contact Alison Linfield, Project Manager at Link Up: 01244 343464 or alison.linfield@linkup.uk.net or Professor Chris Baker: chris.baker@chester.ac.uk

'It's me, Jesus'

David Aston, Parish Administrator at Congleton writes:

"Over 5 years ago I woke at around 4am one Sunday morning with the distinct impression, "Write a book with Jesus in the first person." This was rather unexpected, but I accepted it as being from God (no other explanation, for many reasons!), and finding myself between working at the Message Trust and - as it later turned out - here, set about what I believed God had told me to do, firstly alongside other things, then for 6 months solid over the winter.

The result, "It's Me: Jesus", was published in March this year by Onwards & Upwards,

who took it on last summer. After a local launch and interview on UCB Radio, plus a talk at my parents' church where I grew up, it would be good now to find a wider audience than my own parish. The book is the four Gospels in one narrative, with Jesus telling the story. It can (should) be read as a novel, but there are also footnotes and more detailed notes at the back that readers may follow up as they wish. Several people have told me they read the book through first, then went back with their Bible and the notes.

I am hoping that the book will offer Christian readers a deeper background to the Gospel story, but also give others who might not read a Bible a chance to meet Jesus for the first time.”

Book info:

ISBN: 9781912197257 (paperback; also available as hardback and in various e-formats)

Publisher: Onwards & Upwards

(<http://www.onwardsandupwards.org/product/its-me-jesus/>)

Agricultural Chaplaincy

The Agricultural Chaplain writes:

We are looking for people to fill various roles:

Assistant Chaplains. Each member of the team gives half a day a week, providing pastoral and practical help to the farming community. If you see yourself as a practical and empathetic person, then ring for more details.

Fundraising. Would you be able to offer experience in organising a fund-raising group and apply for funding. If this is your experience or you would like to give it a go, please call.

Chaplaincy Team Leader. The current Team Leader retires in September and a

suitable replacement is sought. This is a full-time paid post, though job-share will be considered. Could this be you? Please call for further details.

Keith Ineson
07967 559 594

Christmas....

...is coming!

I take this opportunity to proffer all appropriate seasonal greetings to churches, Churches Together groups and other Christian networks. May you know joy and peace this Christmas and may the coming year be a time of fruitful endeavour for the Kingdom.

Next Edition

The next issue of the Newsletter will be in March. If you have any items you would like to be included please send them in by 29th February, 2016.

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